



Apostleship of the Sea

Supporting Seafarers Worldwide

Press Release

Date: October 2nd 2017

A vital pastoral work in a vast industry

On the first day of the 24th World Congress of Catholic maritime charity, Apostleship of the Sea (AoS), the continuing value of its support for seafarers and fishermen was affirmed.

Pope Francis in his message to the Congress urged delegates to be the 'Church that harbours the mystery of God that can attract people to him'.

Opening the Congress, the Vice President of the Republic of China (Taiwan), H.E. Chen Chien-jen said that the government of Taiwan appreciates the work of AoS, particularly that seafarers and fishermen are sometimes recruited from developing countries that do not have means to protect their rights.

In his opening address, Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development at the Vatican, noted that 38 million people were engaged in fisheries, 90% of whom were working in small scale fisheries, largely located in Asia and Africa.

Flags of convenience still make identifying ownership difficult, said the Cardinal. Abuses are still present including cases in the fishing industry of forced labour and human trafficking. Exacerbating the problem is the practice of some fishing vessels being at sea for months or years, making it difficult for fishermen to report abuses.

Cardinal Turkson told the more than 250 delegates that their travelling to Kaohsiung provided them with an experience of being uprooted, this he said would be vital for their reflections on the lives and problems of fishermen who often lead an uprooted existence.

The work of the Congress was essential, said the Cardinal, both to better understand the lives of those who depend on the sea but also to see how they can benefit from the evangelising work of the Apostleship of the Sea.

During the opening Mass, Cardinal Turkson expressed the hope that in the AoS ministry chaplains 'would always have the right words to assure [seafarers and fishermen] of God's solicitude for them.'

Delegates heard from Max Schmid of the Environmental Justice Foundation of the shocking effect of illegal fishing on fishermen including those not having work contracts, fishermen not feeling free to leave the vessel, cases of sexual and violent abuse and

even executions at sea. He lauded the work of AoS in ports around the world to secure justice for seafarers where fishermen had suffered abuse.

Cardinal Turkson proposed that in AoS's future work to support fishermen that they encourage bishops of countries without AoS chaplains to establish an outreach. He also encouraged the AoS to encourage their home countries to implement the UN's International Labour Organisation's Work in Fishing Convention.

The Cardinal underlined the need for fishermen to have the friendship of the chaplain or volunteer, to have a place to relax away from their vessel, a place to pray and regain their spiritual strength, to be given the chance to contact their families, to rest, to unload their burdens.

The conference continues until Friday 6th October.

More information about the work AoS does can be found at www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

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A photo of Cardinal Turkson at the opening Mass is available to download at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/apostleshipofthesea/36742562434/>

Further information for Editors

The Apostleship of the Sea, AoS, is a registered charity and agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England & Wales and Scotland. It is wholly reliant on voluntary donations and legacies to continue its work.

90% of world trade is transported by ship, and more than 100,000 ships-visit British ports each year. However the life of a modern seafarer can be dangerous and lonely. They may spend up to a year at a time away from home, separated from their family and loved ones, often working in harsh conditions.

AoS chaplains and ship visitors welcome seafarers to our shores - regardless of their colour, race or creed and provide them with pastoral and practical assistance. They recognise them as brothers with an intrinsic human dignity which can be overlooked in the modern globalised maritime industry.

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www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

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